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Congressman Russ Carnahan encourages local fire departments to apply for existing resources to hire additional fire fighters through December 18.

(WASHINGTON, DC) - Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-3) is urging his colleagues today to vote for the bipartisan Fire Grants Reauthorization Act. The legislation, which Carnahan is co-sponsoring, reauthorizes two critical firefighter assistance grant programs - the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG) and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) program - for the next five years.

Carnahan urged local fire departments to contact his office for assistance in applying for existing grants through the SAFER program. **Applications for the next round of grants began being accepted this week and fire officials have until December 18, 2009 to submit their plan.** In 2008, nine separate SAFER grants were awarded in Missouri totaling \$2,381,180 to help hire additional firefighters.

"Missouri fire departments have been hit hard forcing them to layoff hardworking firefighters," said Congressman Carnahan. **"Local fire chiefs have a month to make the case as to why they deserve assistance in protecting our communities and my staff is here to help them succeed in doing so."**

Since the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program was created in 2000, nearly \$5 billion has gone directly to fire departments across the country to purchase equipment, training, fire trucks and other resources.

"Support for Missouri fire departments is even more important in this tough economy as local officials struggle to provide services - including public safety services - in the face of decreasing budgets," said Carnahan.

Today's legislation makes changes to the AFG program so it can assist all types of communities, from large cities to small towns. To ensure a more equitable distribution of funding, the bill requires the funds to be apportioned such that 25 percent would go to career fire departments, 25 percent would go to combination fire departments, and 25 percent would go to volunteer fire departments. Ten percent would remain for open competition among all types of fire departments. The remaining 15 percent would serve certain other important functions, including fire prevention and safety grants.

The bill also includes other changes to the AFG and SAFER programs, such as lowering the matching requirement for the AFG program from 20 percent to 10 percent - with departments serving populations under 20,000 paying only a 5 percent match.

The bill has been endorsed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, and the National Volunteer Fire Council.

To apply for existing resources area Fire Chiefs are encouraged to contact Suzanne Archer in Congressman Carnahan's St. Louis District Office at (314) 962-1523 and visit firegrantsupport.com.

To view Congressman Carnahan speaking on the U.S. House floor about the importance of firefighter assistance programs visit youtube.com/congressmancarnahan.

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